DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 744 CE 056 931

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TITLE Apparel/Design Symposium: A Model for Articulation between Home Economics Education, Business & Industry, and Professionals & Practitioners.
PUB DATE 1 Dec 90
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Vocational Association (Cincinnati, OH, December 1, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Education; Career Planning; *Clothing Design; Clothing Instruction; *Conferences; *Cooperative Programs; Coordination; *Corporate Support; *Fashion Industry; Goal Orientation; Higher Education; High Schools; Home Economics; Models; Professional Associations; Scholarships; *School Business Relationship

ABSTRACT

The Apparel/Design Symposium, cosponsored by Eastern Michigan University (EMU) and the Fashion Group International (FGI) of Detroit, has been conducted for 7 years. Participants include business/industry professionals and Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois high school, community college, and university students and faculty. EMU faculty and FGI professionals scan the issues that interact with the three Michigan subsystems (educational, business, and professional) to select the theme and to identify a keynote speaker. Students and faculty are informed of the theme 1 year in advance to prepare for career and design scholarship competitions. The Michigan fashion business community is apprised of the theme so that it can identify ways in which to interact. Entry-level students attend the event to create an awareness; midlevel students are involved in activities to extend knowledge; and senior-level students become involved at the integration level as they organize the actual program by using prior classwork and field experiences. Publicity brings community involvement. The retailing/industry involvement comes through FGI members who provide scholarship funds, financial support, judges, publicity, and speakers. Post-symposium follow-up includes evaluations by all participants. (YLB)

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ED328744

American Vocational Association
Annual Convention
Cincinnati, Ohio
December 1, 1990

Apparel/Design Symposium: A Model for Articulation between Home Economics Education, Business & Industry, and Professionals & Practitioners

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I. History of Apparel/Design Symposium

The Apparel/Design Symposium, cosponsored by Eastern Michigan University and The Fashion Group International of Detroit, has been conducted for seven years. The participants, annually numbering over 400, include business/industry professionals; students and faculty from high schools, community colleges and universities in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; and EMU students. The date and the theme for each symposium are set one year in advance. A nationally recognized keynote speaker is identified for the theme with local resources providing supporting presentations. Michigan designers, Michigan Retailers Association, and all educational units in the region are invited to participate in specific activities.

The symposium format begins with the keynote address followed by concurrent small sessions on the theme led by retailers, designers, and educators. Competition for

scholarships has two aspects, career and fashion design. Career scholarships are judged on goals and career related work experience. The theme related design competition requires entrants to analyze the topic and develop a fashion garment. Design judging involves interview and runway competition. A finale fashion show on the theme is presented by Michigan designers and retailers.

The symposium is best described by participants from previous years:

> "It certainly opened new channels of communication between academic and industry professionals and the students who may join their ranks in the future."
> Helene Von Rosenstiel, President
> Helene Von Rosenstiel, Inc., NY

> "Most of all it confirmed the design talents and career goals I hoped I had. It gave me courage to take a risk and attempt designing professionally. After a successful year of designing with the space industry I have come back to school and am finishing my Masters degree at North Carolina State University in Textile Engineering."
> Kim Houchins, Former Scholarship Winner

> "I owe a great deal of thanks and praise to EMU's Apparel/Design Competition for being there and helping me to see the roads available in front of me."
> Douglas Earl, Former Scholarship Winner

> "Students were able to network with other students and I was able to introduce them to faculty at four year institutions to which they might transfer."
> Isabelle M. Lott, Entrepreneur

As is apparent from these quotes the symposium serves multiple needs of a diverse audience. One of these functions is to facilitate the mission of the EMU Fashion Merchandising program which is to:

"provide an education that unites the personal and educational goals of the student with the needs of business and industry. The specialized curriculum combines essential theoretical education with the practical application of skills and abilities. A variety of instructional programs provide students with opportunities for becoming professionally competent, confident and capable of creative thought."

Elizabeth A. Rhodes, PhD, Department Head
Department of Human, Environmental and Consumer Resources

The model in Figure 1 (page 12) helps to better explain the complexity of the role of the Apparel/Design Symposium.

II. Symposium Model for Articulation with Fashion Industry

A. Global Environment

Within the global environment exists many issues relevant to the field of Textiles and Clothing. The faculty at EMU in conjunction with the Detroit Fashion Group International professionals scan the environment to identify a common textiles and clothing theme for the symposium.

B. Theme Selection

The issues which exist in the global environment and interact with the three Michigan subsystems (Educational, Business, and Professional) result in the theme. This dynamic interaction causes different interests to align at different times. Identification of the theme in this manner assures the involvement and interaction of all subparts.

C. Keynote Speaker

Once the theme is selected a keynote speaker is identified who has extensive knowledge of the topic. The person needs to be

knowledgable of theory and current research in the field while able to apply this theory for practitioners and students. Keynote speakers and themes of the past seven years are:

Year	Theme	Keynote Speaker
1984	DESIGNING	Jan Kamn, Fashion Coordinator, Dupont
1985	MADE WITH PRIDE IN MICHIGAN	Jack Henry, Made With Pride Council
1986	LEISURE PURSUITS	Susan Watkins, Cornell
1987	HISTORICAL DRESS	Helene Von Rosenstiel, New York
1988	GRAND ILLUSIONS	Robert Hillestad, University of Nebraska
1989	WIDE WONDERFUL WORLD OF FASHION	Robin Lanier, National Retail Merchants Assoc.; Stanley Gellers, Daily News Record
1990	FABRICATION OF FASHION	Henry Truslow, Sunbury Textile Mills; James Morrissey, ATMI

D. Environmental Readiness

The theme and keynote speaker must be identified one year in advance to establish environmental readiness. Student readiness is a major factor if the symposium is to be educationally successful. In EMU classes the theme and date are made known and students who ultimately plan the event are aware of expectations. Faculty and students across the state are informed of the career and design scholarship competitions and relationship to the theme. Students and faculty then have one year to explore readings, lecture, discussion and thinking relative to the theme, thereby creating a readiness. For example, in 1989 the announcement of the 1990 theme of "Fabrication of Fashion" included the provision by Fiber Industries of fabric to all

students entering the design competition. The challenge was to design for a specific fabric. The result was 30 different garments illustrating the impact of fabric on fashion.

The Business/Retailing/Industry/Agency concerns also need an early readiness preparation if they are to participate fully. The Michigan fashion business community is apprised of the theme and asked to identify ways in which they would like to interact. These professionals as mentors interact with students in preparation for the symposium plus become speakers for the concurrent sessions.

E. Environmental Involvement

At the beginning of the Fall university semester the readiness grows into involvement. EMU students have a variety of roles to play during this semester. Entry level students are required to attend the event to create an awareness. Mid-range students are involved in activities which extend their knowledge. The senior level students become involved at the level of integration as they draw from all their prior classwork and field experiences and organize the actual program. This requires interacting with speakers and professionals as well as being knowledgeable on the topic. Regardless of the level of learning (awareness, knowledge expansion, integration) students are involved in developing a process as well as learning facts; thus, the stimulus for the development of critical thinking skills.

Community environmental involvement occurs in many forms. Mailing of a brochure goes to 1,000 individuals who have

indicated a desire to be on the mailing list. Local and regional newspapers, professional organization newsletters, and national periodicals carry coverage throughout the year.

> "I thought you'd also like to know about the reaction to the story I wrote about your symposium and one of the prize winners. After the story appeared, The Gap, for one, called for the student's name and phone number."
> Stanley Gellers, Associate Editor,
> Daily News Record, NYC

Television coverage has included videos produced by Michigan Employment Security Commission and Detroit area cable TV coverage. The Detroit Historical Museum supplied display space to feature symposium design scholarship winners. Historic Fort Wayne Museum was hostess for the 1987 symposium. In 1989 Miss Jamaica was featured to support the international theme.

This visibility promotes the involvement of students and faculty from the region. Over the years every Michigan university, community college and secondary school with a fashion program has participated. Additionally participants have come from Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana.

> "The symposia have provided a singular opportunity for learning and stimulation for merchandising and design students as well as faculty in the northwest portion of Ohio."
> Dorothy Beling, Associate Professor
> Bowling Green University

The Retailing/Industry environmental involvement comes primarily through contacts in the Fashion Group International whose members represent major retailers. Their continual involvement provides scholarship funds, financial support, judges for competition, publicity and speakers. Michigan designers are

another group which regularly becomes involved by providing judges, speakers and theme related fashion shows. Other industries who provide scholarship funds include Cadillac, Auto Leather Guild, C'Est Simone. Local entrepreneurs also have been involved as speakers, judges and contributors of scholarships.

F. Post Symposium Follow-up

Following the event some very important processes take place. Back in the classrooms students discuss both content and format of what they learned. Professionals who were involved debrief with faculty and students. Everyone is asked to do an evaluation of the event. All of this becomes input for the following year's symposium.

In summary, one can note that the Apparel/Design symposium offers an on-going annual event around which:

students;
* identify personal and professional goals and relate these to the needs of business and industry,
* integrate theoretical education with practical application of skills and abilities
* have an arena in which to develop professional competencies and confidences
* have an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills;

professionals have an arena in which to;
* mentor a student
* network with other professionals
* expand thinking and knowledge base
* develop linkages with universities;

educators have an arena in which to;
* network other educators, nationally known keynote speakers, and practitioners
* interact with students
* participate as judges and speakers
* expand knowledge base.

Pre and post symposium student surveys provide data indicating that the awareness level focused primarily on career awareness:

> "It brought everything to life. I like to experience or get a feel for the industry rather than just hearing or reading about it."
>
> "I didn't realize the broadness of the field and the many possibilities to do just about anything you set your mind to."

The knowledge expansion level students gains enhancement of related classroom topics as current research is brought to life by the keynote speaker.

Students at the integration level, indicated perceptions and outcomes of the symposium. Based on prior exposure most students **perceived** the experience would be worthwhile. All students reported it as valuable after their participation. Most students **evaluated** it as being important to their career development and made comments like:

> "Since I may be in management, promotion and involvement with a lot of different people, this was a good experience having to interact with a lot of different people and coordinating events and people."

Interestingly, most of the students felt participation in the symposium events should be "required" of all majors in the future:

> "This is really the only opportunity in college we get to work alongside with professionals in the field and is an invaluable experience. It is an experience I will remember as one of the finest opportunities I ever had. We really learned what it is like out in the real world of fashion."

Obviously considerable time and effort go into the production of each year's symposium. When students were asked at the beginning

if they thought the project would be worth the time and effort most of them had favorable responses. However, one student did venture forth with this comment:

> "No! Saturdays are a day that I put in my largest number of hours at the job that pays for this class and others. Basically taking Friday and Saturday off will cost me $175-$225."

Afterwards, when asked to evaluate the time and effort student comments again were positive; the same student who is previously quoted had this to say:

> "We were able to hold our meetings during class time with some extra afterwards. I had to take a couple days off work for the symposium but later felt it was worthwhile."

Characteristics identified by the EMU Fashion Merchandising Advisory Board members as necessary employees success were: positive personal characteristics, management/analytical skills, teamwork, communication skills and knowledge of practice skills. The students identified the same ones as goals they had attained while working on the symposium. Additionally, students felt networking was valuable to them.

The symposium day is always "extravagant," "stimulating," and "exciting." However, the real issue is not just a great one-shot event, but rather the fact that the process of planning, producing and evaluating this event is integrated throughout all levels of the Fashion Merchandising program and is central to assisting the program in accomplishing its mission. The impacts of the event are significant to everyone involved and they multiply as the years are added.

III. Evaluation Process (Secondary Home Economics Educators and Students)

A. Follow-up of Scholarship Winners

The design competition and symposium is open to secondary and post secondary level students. Each year an increasing number of designs are submitted by high school students with scholarship winners at that level annually. The participants as followed after high school graduation have gone to various universities and The Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Many are in design positions for significant firms locally, nationally and internationally. Others have found the symposium an opportunity for career information, jobs, networking and knowledge building.

B. Response from Attendees

The Home Economics Educators find benefits through interaction with the business and university community, enrichment of knowledge base for new and innovative products, and service opportunities as design judges and presenters at concurrent sessions.

IV. Recommendations for Model Replication

Through the continual interrelationship of Education/Business/Professionals dynamic training and production programs can be maintained. The Educational community provides the service/instructional component for Business which generates innovations and product lines for the Professionals who provide and receive vitality for the total enterprise.

A summary statement by a symposium professional presenter who had been a student producer was:

"I received so much from this program I have NO choice but to give back."
Karen Palmer, Design Room Manager
EMDAY, Inc., Los Angeles, California.

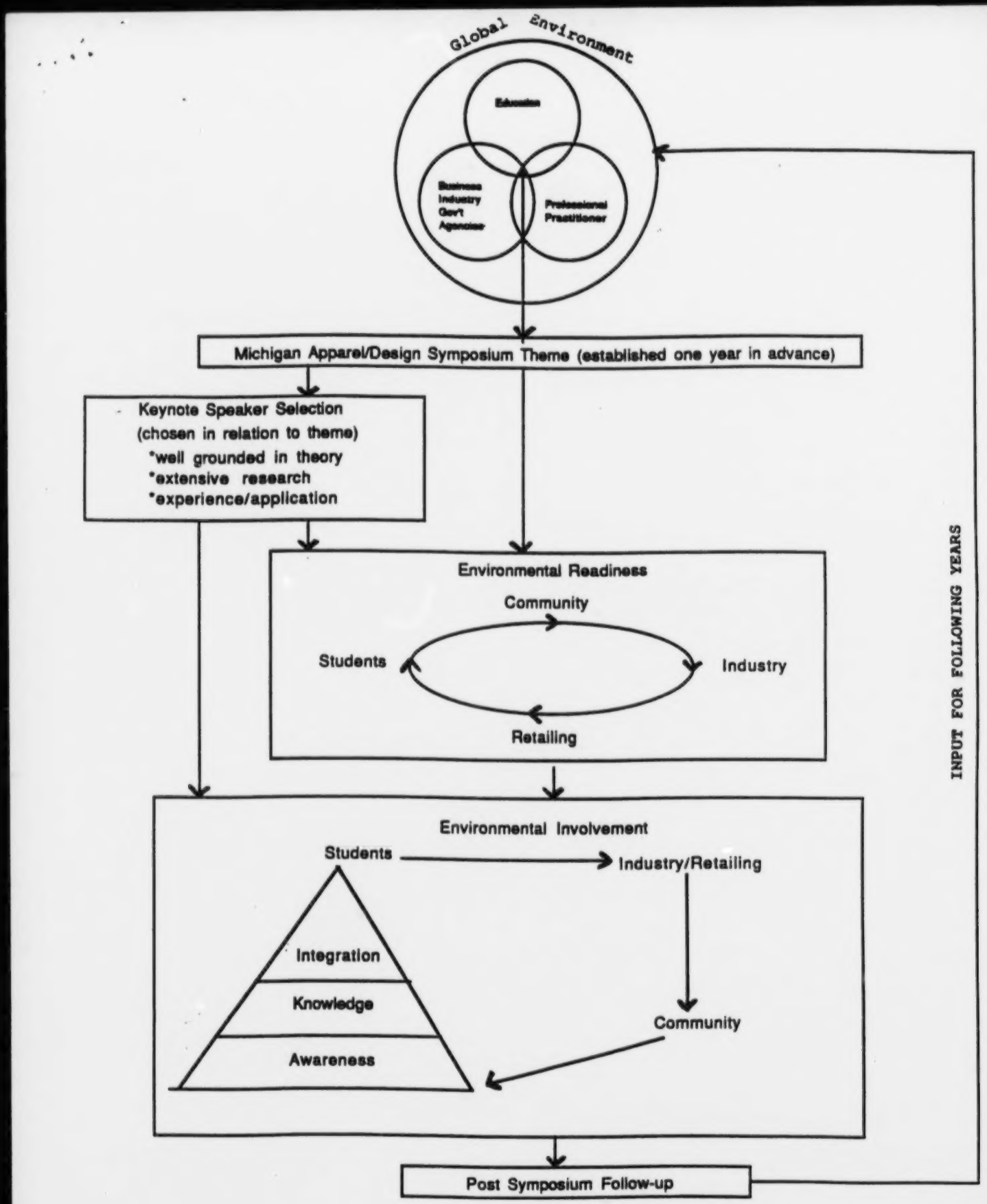

FIGURE 1: APPAREL/DESIGN SYMPOSIUM MODEL